A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE ENGLISH NATION.

Tuesday, June 18. 1706.

IF I should enter upon the Examination of a Cloud of Scandal, vented from the high Church Magazine by their Mouth, the *Rehearsal*, alledging, that in this Paper I write against the Duke of *Marlborough* and my Lord Treasurer; I should seem to put too much value upon the ridiculous Sophisms of the Party, who now set up to prove the Whigs Enemies to the present Government. —I have often desir'd that Author to prove some of his Assertions, before he goes on with more,—and I shall repeat a few, which when he will answer, I'll promise to clear this Paper from having the least Reflection in it, or in its Design, upon the Duke of *Marlborough*.

1. If Kings are vested with their Authority *Jure Divino*, as he has often asserted, inherent in the Race or Line, what Title the QUEEN has to the Crown of *England*?
2. To what End he can argue for the sacred Right of Succession, but to invalidate the Title of the QUEEN?
3. How he makes it out, that Whigs and Rebels are the same things?
4. How he will prove, a Whig wrote the *Memorial* by way of Irony?

These are Queries I have frequently put to him, and which he never attempts to reply to, and which till he does, I have promised him never to answer his subsequent Cavils, as not worth any Man's Notice.

But that I may clear up the Whigs from being Enemies to the Duke of *Marlborough*, and particularly this Paper; I shall examine a little, who are most likely to be Enemies to the Duke and the Government; those that rejoyce

joyce with him at the mighty Succeſſes, with which Heaven bleſſes his Grace's Endeavours to redeem us from Tyranny, and *Jure Divino* Doctrines, or thoſe that repine at them.

And let Mr. *Rebearſer* be blam'd, if this forces me to reveal ſome Follies of his Party, which otherwiſe would have been conceal'd; for I delight not to tell him, that the High-flying Gentlemen, as well Clergy as others, have not ſtuck to expreſs their exceeding Regret, even at this Victory, which nothing of a true Lover of *England*, and the Proteſtant Religion, can forbear rejoycing at.

I told him a Story in my laſt from *Coventry*, of a Clergy-man, who learnedly diſtinguiſh'd of this Matter, and ſaid, it was good News for the Nation, but not for the Church.—Good God! what Church is it we have among us, to whom it is not good, that the *French* Power ſhould be broken.—Another Clergy-man in *London* was heard, on the firſt Arrival of the great News from *Barcelona* in a Paſſion of Concern, to ſwear by his Maker, we are all undone; are theſe the Gentlemen, on whom when I reflect, Mr. *Leſsly* will have me mean the whole Church? No, no Mr. *Rebearſal*, there is in plain *Engliſh* an unhappy Defection in the Inferiour Clergy, and too many are debauch'd with High Church, and *French* Principles, which I take to be the ſame things; but this is the Misfortune, not the Conſtitution of the Church; 'tis her Diſeaſe, ſhe labours under it, and I doubt not, will by the help of Victory and the Duke of *Marlborough*, be in Time cur'd of it.

I ſhall now give him a remarkable and known Hiſtory of High Church Temper, as to the late Victory, as a Teſtimony to the World, who are Enemies to the Government, and the Duke, the High Church, or the Whigs; and becauſe, I will not be charg'd with Forgery, I ſhall take the Freedom to name Perſons, Places and Records, let him confute me if he can?

There has been a remarkable Conteſt in the Town of *Taunton* in *Somerſetſhire*, about the chooſing Church-wardens for this laſt Year for the Pariſh of *Taunton St. Mary's*, in which not the Juſtice of the Cauſe only, but the Strength of Parties, *in which that Town, as well as all* England, *is moſt unhappily divided*, has been fully try'd, and the High Church Gentlemen have had the Mortification to ſee their Illegal and Arbitrary Proceedings condemn'd in an open Court of Juſtice, and the People of *Taunton* reſtor'd to their undoubted Right; *The Caſe in ſhort was thus.*

The Office of Church-warden is a place of ſo much Trouble and Charge, and if honeſtly executed of ſo little Advantage, that few People are ſolicitous to be nam'd to the Employment; but two things made the Caſe differ in *Taunton*, which may perhaps be uſeful to obſerve in other Places, and is therefore touch'd at here.

The Office had been diligently engroſs'd by the Party for ſeveral Years paſt, in which time ſeveral Irregularities had been committed, unneceſſary Charges brought on the Pariſh, Accounts clandeſtinely paſt, the Pariſh Church damnified, and almoſt thrown down, and abundance of unwarrantable Practices made uſe of; of which the Pariſhoners could have no ſatisfactory Account. Theſe things cauſed a great Struggle in the Town at the laſt Election of Church wardens, the one ſide for keeping the Power in their Hands, and the other for getting Men in they could be better ſatisfy'd with.

The Election was at *Eaſter* 1705,—when Mr. *Gale* Miniſter of the Pariſh, claim'd a Right of naming one Church-warden by Vertue of the Cannon Law, *which as it afterwards appear'd*, does give the Miniſter the Right of naming one, where it is not otherwiſe determin'd by the Cuſtom and Uſage of the Place,—Now it was plain, it had been otherwiſe determin'd here by the antient Uſage of the Place; however Mr. *Gale* inſiſted upon his Claim, and accordingly nam'd one *F... is Oſmonton* to be one of the Church-wardens, and the Party ſet up two more, *viz. Tho. Hasker* an Attorney, and *Simon Weſtcot* an Apothecary. The Majority of the Pariſhoners choſe Mr. *Francis Newton*, *Arthur Towil*, and *Tho. Parſons*, the laſt were fairly choſen by an open Poll, Proclamation made, mutually cloſed and determin'd, and no body could imagine any

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Interruption could be given, till High Church Authority comes to interpose; and by this, the Suffrage of the Parishoners was actually destroy'd, Liberty of Election dissolv'd, Majority contemn'd, and the Minor set up in Defiance of Justice.

It is the Custom of *Taunton*, that the Chancellor of the Dioceſs of *Bath* and *Wells* admits and swears the Church-wardens, when chosen by the People; and accordingly Mr. *Newton*, Mr. *Towil*, and Mr. *Parsons* were presented to the Chancellor to be sworn; but in short, he was pleased, without any Reasons given, to refuse them; and tho' a *Mandamus*, and an *alias Mandamus* was sued out and serv'd upon him, he still persisted in his Refusal; at last he considered of it, and admitted one of the three, *viz.* Mr. *Towil*, but refuses the two other; and in their Room, of his own absolute Authority and meer High Church Pleasure, admits and swears two of the other, *viz.* Mr. *Wescot* and Mr. *Osmonton*, who had no manner of Pretence to an Election.

This Treatment brings the honest Parishoners to seek their Remedy at Law; and accordingly Mr. *Newton*, and Mr. *Parsons* bring their Actions against *William Hughes* Esq; Vicar General, and principal Official, *as he stiles himself*, of the Bishop of *Bath* and *Wells*, for swearing the usurping Church-wardens, without being legally chosen, and also against the Minister.

'Tis strange these Gentlemen should not know, that the Reign of Her present Majesty is remarkable, for the Impartial Unbyast Currency of the Laws, and that Oppressions of all sorts, are not only discourag'd by Her Majesty's Royal Example; but that those, who being Oppress'd, either by Church or Party-Tyranny, are sure of Redress, if they apply for it were the Law directs?

Had they Reflected on this, they would not only have desisted their Irregularities, and forborn Imposing on their Neighbours, but much less would they have stood the Tryal of the Law, and ventur'd to appear in a Court of Justice, in a Cause of which, they knew they must have Reason to be Asham'd.

Had they Examin'd but the good Success of the Mayor of *Norwich*, in Swearing an Alderman that was never Chosen, and making double Returns for Members of Parliament, they would have blush'd if so much Grace is not deny'd them, to have been seen in a thing, equally Arbitrary, equally Scandalous, and equally Meriting Reproof.

It is enough to tell the World, they were shamefully cast in both Actions, at *Westminster-Hall* this very Term; and sent down to learn more Wit, having been told from the Bench, they had not Mathematical Heads, and now they may pay their Charges if they can out of the Parish Money—— And if they will accept of my Advice, it should be to behave themselves so for the future, that their Neighbours may not think them unfit to be trusted with the Parish-Stock; the best Method for which, is to give a good Account of what they have been trusted with already.

Thus much for their Mortifying Election, I come now to what more particularly concerns the present Case; *viz.* Their Behaviour; as to the Publick of which, this is the Abract.

The Confirmation of the Famous Victory at *Ramellies*, and the taking of *Brussels*, *Ghent*, *Bruges*, &c. happen'd to come to *Taunton*, both on the same Day, *viz.* Thursday, *May* 24.

The Whigs, *as they do Universally, Express* the greatest Surprize of Joy possible, at such a Flux of welcome News; and to Express their Loyalty, several of them went, tho' late at Night, to Mr. *Thomas Gale*, the Mayor of the Town, to have the Bells rung; it is to be Noted they did not go to him as Mayor, but as he is also Church-Warden of *Taunton St. Marys*, applying themselves at the same time to Mr. *Butler*; another of the Church-wardens, for Liberty to ring, but were peremptorily deny'd by both,—several Arguments were us'd to perswade, and particularly the Dissenters of the Town had taken the Charge upon them, and sent Money for the Ringers; at last about Midnight, they were prevail'd with to let them ring, tho' much against their Wills, as appear'd; for the next day

Mr.